Aden

000 I should not have been at all surprised to hear that my old friend Ash Shami had had a hand in the matter. We were not far from the Yemen border and the presence of the Governor of Aden in the Lower Yafa hills where only one of my predecessors had been before, and that nearly twenty-five years previously, implying as it did a potential extension of our direct influence, must have been disturbing to that astute gentleman.

487 The path down the hill was still impassable for animals
312 when we left Al Qara to return to Aden two days later, so
562 we were obliged to leave by the other track on the other side of the hill which is used by the women to bring water from the wells in the valley far below.

643 We started the return journey in the early morning after
793 bidding our host, the Sultan, farewell and thanking him for his
• 778 kindness to us during the visit. We left him there alone, the
534 descendant of the old priest kings of pagan pre-Islamic times,
789 surrounded by his wild tribesmen who in times of trouble venerate him as they would a God, for is he not the custodian of the drum of the Yafais which is kept in some secret chamber in Al Qara only to be sounded when the Yafa nation is in sore distress, and has he not the magical gift of rain-making in times of drought, like his ancestors before him. These things they believe, but when the rainfall is sufficient and the Yafa people are free from want or oppression then they treat him with scant ceremony, which is the fate of all gods, ancient or modern, in the East or in the West.

000 The return journey, being downhill all the way, was much easier and quicker and we had to spend only one night in the open. On the second and last day of the return journey something went wrong with the lunch-time arrangements and I, mounted once again on the Sultan's donkey, rode past the rendezvous and did not realise that I had done so until I had travelled some distance. Loath to retrace my steps, I decided to forgo lunch and to push on to the Government Guard Post below which, on the way up, we had left our motor transport. I rode alone for most of the way, except for the Jemadar and his bosom companion, an elderly Qadhi, who had travelled up

2: Hickinbotham G-4, 5 (ca. 1931-ca. 1957)
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by which time most of the duck had gone away, and then sailed for the rest of the season, although I have, on occasion, done both on the same morning,. but to get up at 2 a.m., drive forty miles along the seashore and over rough country, shoot till 9 a.m., then drive forty miles back and take the helm in a yacht race from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. was rather too much for my lazy temperament, and I did not often make the effort.

When I first went to Aden I had a small dhow built on the Ma'alla water-front in one of the attractive boat yards which were such a fascinating feature of the place and had been for many years until progress, initiated by myself, reclaimed the area; and the builders, deprived of the sea, went to an island in the harbour where a beach had been made for their reception. The *Nur-al-Bahr* or *Light of the Sea*, as my dhow was named, was twenty feet overall and was constructed of teak fastened below the water-line with copper nails and above with iron, and was built during the hot weather to be ready for the winter sailing season. I spent many enjoyable hours watching her grow. When she was finished she was painted white below the water line and with a traditional pattern in green and blue and red above; and she was provided with two eyes, one on each side of the bow, so that she could see where she was going, as my Arab boat boys pointed out when I uttered a mild protest at this last piece of artistry. When all was finished there came the final ceremony before the actual launching, a ceremony as old as the hills wrapped in the mists of pre-Islamic times when blood sacrifices were common throughout the world. A sheep, acquired at my expense, was the sacrifice and was slaughtered near the vessel. The fresh blood was daubed on the stern post, along the keel, and on the stem, after which the animal was cooked and eaten by the builders. There was a very real reason for this sacrifice and it was not, as some people might think, to provide the builders with a substantial supper. It was to give a life to the vessel before she was launched and thus prevent her from taking one after she was afloat, as she surely would have done according to popular belief. In the Persian Gulf a further and somewhat similar belief is that a woman has only to step over a new laid keel to become pregnant and in the